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OXFORD DEMOCRAT,

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY, BY

C. W. ELLIS,

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

TERMS:—One Dollar and Fifty Cents in advance. Advertisements inserted on reasonable terms.—The Proprietor not being accountable for any error beyond the amount charged for the advertisement. A reasonable deduction will be made for cash in advance.

Book and Job Printing

EXECUTED WITH NEATNESS AND DESPATCH.

POPULAR TALES.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

ADVENTURES IN TEXAS.

No. III.

CONTINUED.

THE STRUGGLE.

I had been but three or four months in Texas, when, in consequence of the oppressive conduct of the Mexican military authorities, symptoms of discontent showed themselves, and several skirmishes occurred between the American settlers and the soldiery. The two small forts of Velasco and Nacogdoches were taken by the former, and their garrisons and a couple of field officers made prisoners; soon after which, however, the quarrel was made up by the intervention of Col. Austin, on the part of Texas and Colonel Mejia on the part of the Mexican authorities.

But in the year '33 occurred Santa Anna's defection from the liberal party, and the imprisonment of Stephen F. Austin, the Texian representative in the Mexican Congress by the vice-president Gomez Farias. This was followed by Texas adopting the constitution of 1834, and declaring itself an independent state of the Mexican Republic. Finally, toward the close of 1835, Texas as a free and sovereign republic, voted itself a free and sovereign republic, and prepared to defend by arms its newly asserted liberty.

The first step to be taken was to secure our communications with the United States by getting possession of the sea-ports. General Cos had occupied Galveston harbour and built and garrisoned a block-fort, nominally for the purpose of enforcing the custom laws but in reality with a view to cut off our communications with New Orleans and the States. This fort it was necessary to get possession of and my friend Fanning and myself were appointed to that duty by the Alcalde, who had taken a prominent part in all that had occurred.

Our whole force and equipment wherewith to accomplish this enterprise, consisted in a sealed despatch, to be opened at the town of Columbia, and a half-breed named Agostino, who acted as our guide. On reaching Columbia we called together the principal inhabitants of the place and of the neighbouring towns of Bolivar and Marion, and unsealed the letter in their presence, and six hours afterwards the forces therein specified were assembled, and we were on our march towards Galveston. The next day the fort was taken, and the garrison made prisoners without our losing a single man.

We sent off our guide to the government at San Felipe with news of our success. In nine days he returned bringing us the thanks of Congress and fresh orders. We were to leave a garrison in the fort and then ascend Trinity river, and marched towards San Antonio de Bexar. This route was all the more agreeable to Fanning and myself, as it would bring us into the immediate vicinity of the haciendas, or estates, of which we had some time previously obtained a grant from the Texian government; and we did not doubt that we were indebted to our friend the Alcalde for the orders which thus conciliated our private conveniences with our public duty.

As we marched along we found the whole country in commotion, the settlers all arming and hastening to the distant place of rendezvous. We arrived at Trinity river one afternoon, and immediately sent messengers for forty miles in all directions to summon the inhabitants. At the period in question, the plantations in that part of the country were very few and far between, but nevertheless by the afternoon of the next day we had got together four-and-thirty men mounted on mustangs, each equipped with rifle and bowie-knife, powder horn and bullet-bag and furnished with provisions for several days. With these we started for San Antonio de Bexar, a march of two hundred and fifty miles, through trackless prairies intersected with rivers and streams, which although not quite so big as the Mississippi or Potomac, were yet deep and wide enough to have offered serious impediments to regular armies.

But to Texian farmers and backwoodsmen, they were trifling obstacles. Those we could not wade through we swam over; and in due time and without any incident worthy of note, reached the appointed place of rendezvous, which was on the river Salado, about fifteen miles from San Antonio, the principal city of the province. This latter place it was intended to attack—an enterprise of some boldness and risk, considering that the town was protected by a strong fort amply provided with heavy artillery, and had a garrison of nearly three thousand men, commanded by officers who had, for the most part, distinguished themselves in the revolutionary wars against the Spaniards. Our whole army, which we found encamped on the Salado, under the command of General Austin, did not exceed eight hundred men.

The day after that on which Fanning and myself, with our four and thirty recruits, reached headquarters, a council of war was held, and it was resolved to advance as far as the mission of Santa Espada. The advance guard was to push forward immediately; the main body would follow the next day. Fanning and myself were appointed to the command of the vanguard, in conjunction with Mr. Wharton, a wealthy planter, who had brought a strong party of volunteers with him, and whose mature age and cool judgment it was thought, would counterbalance any excess of youthful heat and impetuosity on our part. Selecting ninety-two men out of the eight hundred, who to a man volunteered to accompany us, we set out for the mission.

These missions are a sort of picket-houses or outposts of the Catholic church, and are found in great numbers in all frontier provinces of Spanish America, especially in Texas, Santa Fe, and Coahuila. They are usually of sufficient strength to afford their inmates security against any predatory party of Indians or other marauders, and are occupied by priests, who while using their endeavors to spread the doctrines of the Church of Rome, act also as spies and agents of the Mexican government.

On reaching San Espada, we held a discussion as to the propriety of remaining there until the general came up, or of advancing at once toward the river. Wharton inclined to the former plan, and it was certainly the most prudent, for the mission was a strong building, surrounded by a high wall, and might have been held against very superior numbers. Fanning and I, however, did not like the idea of being cooped up in a house, and at last Wharton yielded. We left our horses and mustangs in charge of eight men and with the remainder set out in the direction of Salado, which flows from north to south, a third of a mile to the westward of the mission. About half way between the latter and the river was a small group, or island, of musket trees, the only object that broke uniformity of the prairie. The bank of the river on our side was tolerably steep about eight or ten feet high, hollowed out here and there and covered with a thick network of wild vines. The Salado at the spot described a sort of bow-shape curve, with a ford at either end, by which alone the river can be passed for although not very broad, it is rapid and deep. We resolved to take up a position within this bow calculating that we might manage to defend the two fords, which were not above a quarter of a mile apart.

At the same time we did not lose sight of the dangers of such a position, and of the almost certainty that if the enemy managed to cross the river we should be surrounded and cut off. But our success on the few occasions on which we had hitherto come to blows with the Mexicans, at Velasco, Nacogdoches, and Galveston, had inspired us with confidence, that we considered ourselves a match for thousands of such foes and actually began to wish the enemy would attack us before the main body came up. We reconnoitered the ground, stationed a picket of twelve men at each ford, and an equal number in the island of musket trees; and established ourselves with the remainder amongst the vines and in the hollows of the river bank.

The commissariat department of the Texian army was, as may be supposed not yet placed upon any very regular footing. In fact every man was, for the present his own commissariat general. Finding our stock of provisions to be very small, we sent out a party of foragers, who soon returned with three sheep, which they had taken from a rancho within a mile of San Antonio. An old priest, whom they found there, had threatened them with the anger of Heaven and of General Cos; but they paid little attention to his denunciation, and, throwing down three dollars walked off with the sheep. The priest became furious, got upon his mule, and trotted away in the direction of the city to complain to General Cos of the misconduct of the heretics.

After this we made no doubt that we should soon have a visit from the worthy Dons. Nevertheless the evening and the night passed away without incident. Day broke—still no sign of the Mexicans. This treacherous sort of calm, we thought, might forebode a storm and we did not allow it to lull us into security. We let the men get their breakfast which they had hardly finished when the picket, from the upper ford, came in with news that a strong body of cavalry was approaching the river and that their vanguard was already in the hollow way leading to the ford. We had scarcely received this intelligence when we heard the blare of the trumpets, and the next moment we saw the officers pushing their horses up the declivities bank, closely followed by their men, whom they formed up in the prairie. We counted six small squadrons, about three hundred men in all. They were the Durango dragoons—smart troops enough to all appearances, capitally mounted and equipped, and armed with carbines and sabres.

Although the enemy had doubtless reconnoitered us from the opposite shore, and ascertained our position, he could not form any accurate idea of our numbers, for with a view to deceive him, we kept the men in constant motion, sometimes showing a part of them on the prairie, then causing them to disappear again behind the vines and bushes. This was all very knowing for young soldiers such as we were; but on the other hand we had committed a grievous error, and sinned against all established military rules by not placing a picket on the further side of the river, to warn us of the approach of the enemy, and the direction in which he was coming. There can be little doubt that if we had had earlier notice of their approach, thirty or forty good marksmen—and all our people were that—might not only have delayed the advance of the Mexicans, but perhaps even totally disgusted them of their attempt to cross the Salado. The hollow way on the other side of the River, leading to the ford, was narrow and tolerably steep, and the bank at least six times as high as on our side. Nothing

would have been easier than to have stationed a party so as to pick off the cavalry as they wound through this sort of pass, and emerged two by two upon the shore. Our error, however, did not strike us till it was too late to repair it; so we were fain to console ourselves with the reflection that that Mexicans would be much more likely to attribute our negligence to an excess of confidence in our resources, than to the inexperience in military matters, which was the real cause. We resolved to do our best to merit the good opinion which we thus supposed them to entertain of us.

When the whole of the dragoons had crossed the water, they marched on for a short distance in an easterly direction; then, wheeling to the right proceeded southward, until within some five hundred paces of us, where they halted. In this position, the line of cavalry formed the chord of the arc, described by the river, and occupied by us.

As soon as they halted they opened their fire, although they could not see one of us for we were completely sheltered by the bank. Our Mexican heroes, however, apparently did not think it necessary to be within sight or range of their opponents before firing, for they gave us a rattling volley at a distance which no carbine would carry. This done others galloped on for about a hundred yards, halted again, loaded, fired again. They continued this sort of *manceuvre* till they found themselves within two hundred and fifty paces of us, and then appeared inclined to take a little time for reflection.

We kept ourselves perfectly still. The dragoons evidently did not like the aspect of matters. Our remaining concealed and not replying to their fire seemed to bother them. We saw the officers taking a deal of pains to encourage their men, and, at last, two squadrons advanced the others following more slowly, a short distance in the rear. This was the moment we had waited for. No sooner had the dragoons got into a center, than six of our men who had received orders to that effect, sprang up the bank, took steady aim at the officers, fired, and then jumped down again.

As we had expected, the small number that had showed themselves, encouraged the Mexicans to advance. They seemed at first taken rather aback by the fall of four of their officers; but nevertheless, after a moment's hesitation, they came thundering along full speed. They were within sixty or seventy yards of us, when Fanning and thirty of our riflemen assailed the bank, and with a coolness and precision that would have done credit to the most veteran troops poured a steady fire into the ranks of the dragoons.

It required some nerve and courage for men who have never gone through any regular military training to stand their ground singly and unprotected, within fifty yards of an advancing line of cavalry. Our fellows did it however and fired—not all at once in a hurry, but slowly and deliberately; a running fire, every shot of which told. Saddle after saddle was emptied; the men, as they had been ordered, always picking out the foremost horsemen, and as soon as they had fired jumping down the bank to reload. When the whole of the thirty men had discharged their rifles, Wharton and myself with the reserve of six and thirty more, took their places; but the dragoons had almost had enough already, and we had scarcely fired ten shots, when they executed a right about turn, with a uniformity and rapidity which did infinite credit to their drill; and went off at a pace that soon carried them out of the reach of our bullets. They had probably not expected so warm a reception. We saw their officers doing every thing they could to check their flight imploring, threatening, and even cutting at them with their sabres, but it was no use—if they were to be killed, it must be in their own way, and they preferred being cut down by their officers to encountering the deadly precision of rifles in the hands of men who being sure of hitting a squirrel at a hundred yards, were not likely to miss a Durango dragoon at any point within range.

Our object in ordering the men to fire slowly was, always to have thirty or forty rifles loaded wherewith to receive the enemy should he attempt a charge *en masse*. But our first greeting had been a sickener, and it appeared almost doubtful whether he would venture to attack us again, although the officers did every thing in their power to induce their men to advance. For a long time neither threats, entreaties nor reproaches produced any effect. We saw the officers jesting and laughing, pointing to us with their sabres and impatiently spurting their horses, till the furious animals plunged and reared, and sprang with all four feet from the ground. It is only just to say, that the officers exhibited a degree of courage far beyond anything we had expected from them.—Of the two squadrons that charged us two thirds of the officers had fallen; but those who remained, instead of appearing intimidated by their comrades' fate, redoubled their efforts to bring their men forward.

At last there appeared some probability of their accomplishing this, after a most curious and truly Mexican fashion. Posting themselves in front of their squadrons, they rode on alone for a hundred yards, or so, halted, looked round, as much as to say—"You see there is no danger as far as this," and then galloping back led their men on. Each time that they executed this maneuver, the dragoons would advance slowly some thirty or forty paces, and then halt as simultaneously as if by the word of command had been given. Of when the officers again, some distance in front, and then back again to their men, and got them on a little farther. In this manner these heroes were inveigled once more to within a hundred and fifty yards of our position.

Of course, at each of the numerous halts which they made during their advance, they favored us with a general, but most innocuous discharge of their carbines; and at last, gaining confidence, I suppose, from our passiveness, and from the noise and smoke they themselves had been making, three squadrons which had not yet been under fire, formed open column and advanced on a trot. Without giving them time to halt or reflect—"Forward! Charge!" shouted the officers, urging their own horses to their utmost speed; and following the impulse thus given, the three squadrons came charging furiously along.

Up sprang thirty of our men to receive them. Their orders were to fire slowly, and not throw away a shot, but the gleaming sabres and rapid approach of the dragoons hurried some of them, and firing a hasty volley, they jumped down the bank again. This precipitation had nearly been fatal to us. Several of the dragoons fell, and there was some confusion and a momentary faltering amongst the others; but they still came on. At this critical moment, Wharton and myself, with the reserve, showed ourselves on the bank. "Slow and sure—mark your men!" shouted we both. Wharton on the right and I on the left. The command was obeyed: rifle after rifle cracked off, always aimed at the foremost of the dragoons, and at every report a saddle was emptied. Before we had all fired, Fanning and a dozen of his sharpest men had again loaded; and were by this time ready to fire.

For nearly a minute the Mexicans remained, as if stupefied by our murderous fire, and uncertain whether to advance or retire; but those who attempted the former, were invariably shot down, they at last began a retreat, which was soon converted into a rout. We gave them a farewell volley, which eased a few more horses of their riders—and then got under cover again, to await what might next occur.

But the Mexican caballeros had no notion of coming up to the scratch a third time. They kept patrolling about, some three or four hundred yards off, and firing volleys at us, which they were able to do with perfect impunity, as at that distance we did not think proper to return a shot. The skirmish had lasted nearly three quarters of an hour. Strange to say, we had not a single man wounded, although at times the bullets had fallen about us as thick as hail. We could not account for this. Many of us had been hit by the balls, but a bruise or a graze of the skin was the worst consequence that had ensued. We were in a fair way to deem ourselves invulnerable.

We were beginning to think that the fight was over for the day, when our videttes at the lower ford brought us the somewhat unpleasant intelligence that large masses of infantry were approaching the river, and would soon be in sight. The words were hardly uttered, when the roll of the drums, and shrill squeak of the fife became audible, and in a few minutes the head of the column of infantry having crossed the ford, ascended the sloping bank, and defiled in the prairie opposite the island of musket trees. As company after company appeared, we were able to form a pretty exact estimate of their numbers. There were two battalions, together about a thousand men; and they brought a field-piece with them. These were certainly rather long odds to be opposed to seventy-two men and three officers; for it must be remembered that we had left twenty of our people at the mission and in the island of trees. Two battalions of infantry, and six squadrons of dragoons—the latter, to be sure, disheartened and diminished by the loss of some fifty men, but nevertheless formidable opponents, now they were supported by the foot soldiers.—About twenty Mexicans to each of us. It was getting past a joke. We were all capital shots, and most of us, besides our rifles, had a brace of pistols in our belts; but what were seventy-five rifles, and five or six score of pistols against a thousand muskets and bayonets, two hundred and fifty dragoons, and a field-piece loaded with canister? If the Mexicans had a spark of courage or soldiership about them our fate was sealed. But it was exactly this courage and soldiership, which we made sure would be wanting.

Nevertheless we, the officers, could hardly repress a feeling of anxiety and self-reproach, when we reflected that we had brought our comrades into such a hazardous predicament. But on looking around us, our apprehensions vanished. Nothing could exceed the perfect coolness and confidence with which the men were cleaning and preparing their rifles for the approaching conflict; no bravado—no boasting, talking or laughing, but a calm decision of manner, which at once told us, that if it were possible to overcome such odds as were brought against us, those were the men to do it.

Our arrangements for the approaching struggle were soon completed. Fanning and Wharton were to make head against the infantry, and cavalry. I was to capture the field-piece—an eight-pounder.

This gun was to be placed by the Mexicans upon their extreme left, close to the river, the shores of which it commanded for a considerable distance. The bank on which we were posted was, as before mentioned, indented by caves and hollows, and covered with a thick tapestry of vines and other plants, which was now very useful in concealing us from the artillerymen. The latter made a pretty good guess at our position; however, and at the first discharge, the canister whizzed past us at a very short distance. There was not a moment to lose, for one well-directed shot might exterminate half of us. Followed by a dozen men, I worked my way as well as I could through the labyrinth of vines and bushes, and was not more than fifty yards from the gun, when it was again fired. No one was hurt, although the shot was evidently intended for my

party. The enemy could not see us; but the motion of the vines, as we passed through them, had betrayed our whereabouts; so, perceiving that we were discovered, I sprang up the bank into the prairie, followed by my men to whom I shouted, above all to aim at the artillerymen.

I had raised my own rifle to my shoulder, when I let it fall again in astonishment at an apparition that presented itself to my view. 'This was a tall, lean, wild figure, with a face overgrown by a long beard that hung down upon his breast, and dressed in a leathery cap, jacket, and moccasins. Where this man had sprung from was a perfect riddle. He was unknown to any of us, although I had some vague recollection of having seen him before, but where or when, I could not call to mind. He had a long rifle in his hands, which he must have fired once already, for one of the artillerymen lay dead by the gun. At the moment I first caught sight of him, he shot down another, and then began reloading with a rapid dexterity, that proved him to be well used to the thing. My men were as much astonished as I was by this strange apparition, which appeared to have started out of the earth; and for a few seconds they forgot to fire, and stood gazing at the stranger. The latter did not seem to approve of their inaction.

"D—ye eyes, ye starin' fools! should he in a rough horse voice, 'don't ye see them artillerymen? Why don't ye knock 'em on the head?' It certainly was not the moment to remain idle. We fired; but our astonishment had thrown us off the balance, and we nearly all missed. We sprang down the bank again to reload, just as the men serving the gun were slewing it round, so as to bring it to bear upon us. Before this was accomplished, we were under cover, and the stranger had the benefit of the discharge, of which he took no more notice than if he had borne a charmed life. Again we heard the crack of his rifle, and when, having reloaded, we once more ascended the bank, he was taking aim at the last artilleryman, who fell, as his companions had done.

"D—ye, for leggin' fellows!" growled the stranger. "Why don't ye take that 'ere big gun?"

Our small numbers, the bad direction of our volley, but above all the precipitation with which we had jumped down the bank after firing it, had so encouraged the enemy, that a company of infantry, drawn up some distance in the rear of the field-piece, fired a volley, and advanced at double quick time, part of them making a small *detour* with the intention of cutting us off from our friends. At this moment, we saw Fanning and thirty men coming along the river bank to our assistance; so without minding the Mexicans who were getting behind us, we rushed forward to within twenty paces of those in our front, and taking steady aim, brought down every man his bird. The sort of desperate coolness with which this was done, produced the greater effect on our opponents, as being something quite out of their way. They would, perhaps, have stood firm against a volley from five times our number, at a rather greater distance; but they did not like having their mustaches singed by our powder; and after a moment's wavering and hesitation, they shouted out "Diabólos! Diabólos!" and throwing away their muskets, broke into a precipitate flight.

Fanning and Wharton now came up with all the men. Under cover of the infantry's advance, the gun had been re-manned, but, luckily for us, only by infantry soldiers; for had there been artillerymen to seize the moment when we were all standing exposed on the prairie, they might have diminished our numbers not a little. The fuse was already burning, and we had just time to get under the bank when the gun went off. Up we jumped again, and looked about us to see what was next to be done.

Although hitherto all the advantages had been on our side, our situation was still a very perilous one. The company we had put to flight had rejoined its battalion, which was now beginning to advance by *echelon* of companies. The second battalion, which was rather further from us, was moving forward in like manner, and in a parallel direction. We should probably, therefore, have to resist the attack of a dozen companies, one after the other; and it was to be feared that the Mexicans would finish by getting over their panic terror of our rifles, and exchange their distant and ineffectual platoon-firing for a charge with the bayonet, in which their superior numbers would tell. We observed, also, that the cavalry, which had been keeping itself at a safe distance, was now put in motion, and formed up close to the island of musket trees, to which the flank of the infantry was also extending itself.—Thence they had clear ground for a charge down upon us.

Meanwhile, what had become of the twelve men whom we had left in the island? Were they still there, or had they fallen back upon the mission in dismay at the overwhelming force of the Mexicans? If the latter it was a bad business for us, for they were all capital shots, and well armed with rifles and pistols. We heartily wished we had brought them with us, as well as the eight men at the mission. Cut off from us as they were, what could they do against the whole of the cavalry and two companies of infantry which were now approaching the island? To add to our difficulties, our ammunition was beginning to run short. Many of us had only half powder and ball for fifteen or sixteen charges, which were now reduced to six or seven. It was no use depending, however; and after a hurried consultation, it was agreed that Fanning and Wharton should open a fire upon the enemy's centre while I made a dash at the field-piece before any more infantry had time to come up for its protection. The infantry-men who had re-manned the gun were by this time shot down, and, as none had

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As we marched along we found the whole country in commotion, the settlers all arming and hastening to the distant place of rendezvous. We arrived at Trinity river one afternoon, and immediately sent messengers for forty miles in all directions to summon the inhabitants. At the period in question, the plantations in that part of the country were very few and far between, but nevertheless by the afternoon of the next day we had got together four-and-thirty men mounted on mustangs, each equipped with rifle and bowie-knife, powder horn and bullet-bag and furnished with provisions for several days. With these we started for San Antonio de Bexar, a march of two hundred and fifty miles, through trackless prairies intersected with rivers and streams, which although not quite so big as the Mississippi or Potomac, were yet deep and wide enough to have offered serious impediments to regular armies.

But to Texian farmers, and backwoodsmen, they were trifling obstacles. Those we could not wade through we swam over; and in due time, and without any incident worthy of note, reached the appointed place of rendezvous, which was on the river Salado, about fifteen miles from San Antonio, the principal city of the province. This latter place it was intended to attack—an enterprise of some boldness and risk, considering that the town was protected by a strong fort amply provided with heavy artillery, and had a garrison of nearly three thousand men, commanded by officers who had, for the most part, distinguished themselves in the revolutionary wars against the Spaniards. Our whole army, which we found encamped on the Salado, under the command of General Austin, did not exceed eight hundred men.

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These missions are a sort of picket-houses or outposts of the Catholic church, and are found in great numbers in all frontier provinces of Spanish America, especially in Texas, Santa Fe, and Colahuilla. They are usually of sufficient strength to afford their inmates security against any predatory party of Indians or other marauders, and are occupied by priests, who while using their endeavors to spread the doctrines of the Church of Rome, act also as spies and agents of the Mexican government.

On reaching San Espada, we held a discussion as to the propriety of remaining there until the general came up, or of advancing at once toward the river. Wharton inclined to the former plan and it was certainly the most prudent, for the mission was a strong building, surrounded by a high wall, and might have been held against very superior numbers. Fanning and I, however did not like the idea of being cooped up in a house, and at last Wharton yielded. We left our horses and mustangs in charge of eight men and the remainder set out in the direction of Salado, which flows from north to south, a third of a mile to the westward of the mission. About half way between the latter and the river was a small group, or island, of musket trees, the only object that broke uniformity of the prairie. The bank of the river on our side was tolerably steep about eight or ten feet high, hollowed out here and there and covered with a thick network of wild vines. The Salado at the spot described a sort of bow-shape curve, with a ford at either end, by which alone the river can be passed for although not very broad, it is rapid and deep. We resolved to take up a position within this bow calculating that we might manage to defend the two fords, which were not above a quarter of a mile apart.

At the same time we did not lose sight of the dangers of such a position, and of the almost certainty that if the enemy managed to cross the river we should be surrounded and cut off. But our success on the few occasions on which we had hitherto come to blows with the Mexicans, at Velasco, Nacogdoches, and Galveston, had inspired us with confidence, that we considered ourselves a match for thousands of such foes and actually began to wish the enemy would attack us before the main body came up. We reconnoitered the ground, stationed a picket of twelve men at each ford, and an equal number in the island of musket trees; and established ourselves with the remainder amongst the vines and in the hollows on the river bank.

The commissariat department of the Texian army was, as may be supposed not yet placed up on any very regular footing. In fact every man was, for the present his own commissariat general. Finding our stock of provisions to be very small, we sent out a party of foragers, who soon returned with three sheep, which they had taken from a rancho within a mile of San Antonio. An old priest, whom they found there, had threatened them with the anger of Heaven and of General Cos; but they paid little attention to his denunciation, and throwing down three dollars walked off with the sheep. The priest became furious, got upon his mule, and trotted away in the direction of the city to complain to General Cos of the misconduct of the heretics.

After this we made no doubt that we should soon have a visit from the worthy Mons. Nevertheless the evening and the night passed away without incident. Day broke—still no sign of the Mexicans. This treacherous sort of calm, we thought, might forebode a storm and we did not allow it to lull us into security. We let the men get their breakfast which they had hardly finished when the picket, from the upper ford, came in with news that a strong body of cavalry was approaching the river and that their vanguard was already in the hollow way leading to the ford. We had scarcely received this intelligence when we heard the blare of the trumpets, and the next moment we saw the officers pushing their horses up the declivity bank, closely followed by their men, whom they formed up in the prairie. We counted six small squadrons, about three hundred men in all. They were the Durango dragoons—smart troops enough to all appearances, capably mounted and equipped, and armed with carbines and sabres.

Although the enemy had doubtless reconnoitered us from the opposite shore, and ascertained our position, he could not form any accurate idea of our numbers, for with a view to deceive him, we kept the men in constant motion, sometimes showing a part of them on the prairie, then causing them to disappear again behind the vines and bushes. This was all very knowing for young soldiers such as we were; but on the other hand we had committed a grievous error, and sinned against all established military rules by not placing a picket on the further side of the river, to warn us of the approach of the enemy, and the direction in which he was coming. There can be little doubt that if we had had earlier notice of their approach, thirty or forty good marksmen—and all our people were that—might not only have delayed the advance of the Mexicans, but perhaps even totally disgusted them of their attempt to cross the Salado. The hollow way on the other side of the river, leading to the ford, was narrow and tolerably steep, and the bank at least six times as high as on our side. Nothing

would have been easier than to have stationed a party so as to pick off the cavalry as they wound through this sort of pass, and emerged two by two upon the shore. Our error, however, did not strike us till it was too late to repair it; so we were fain to console ourselves with the reflection that that Mexicans would be much more likely to attribute our negligence to an excess of confidence in our resources, than to the inexperience in military matters, which was the real cause. We resolved to do our best to merit the good opinion which we thus supposed them to entertain of us.

When the whole of the dragoons had crossed the water, they marched on for a short distance in an easterly direction; then, wheeling to the right proceeded southward, until within some five hundred paces of us, where they halted. In this position, the line of cavalry formed the chord of the arc described by the river, and occupied by us.

As soon as they halted they opened their fire, although they could not see one of us for we were completely sheltered by the bank. Our Mexican heroes, however, apparently did not think it necessary to be within sight or range of their opponents before firing, for they gave us a rattling volley at a distance which no carbine would carry. This done others galloped on for about a hundred yards, halted again, loaded, fired again. They continued this sort of *manea* till they found themselves within two hundred and fifty paces of us, and then appeared inclined to take a little time for reflection.

We kept ourselves perfectly still. The dragoons evidently did not like the aspect of matters. Our remaining concealed and not replying to their fire seemed to bother them. We saw the officers taking a deal of pains to encourage their men, and, at last, two squadrons advanced the others following more slowly, a short distance in the rear. This was the moment we had waited for. No sooner had the dragoons got into a canter, than six of our men who had received orders to that effect, sprang up the bank, took steady aim at the officers, fired, and then jumped down again.

As we had expected, the small number that had showed themselves, encouraged the Mexicans to advance. They seemed at first taken rather aback by the fall of four of their officers; but nevertheless, after a moment's hesitation, they came thundering along full speed. They were within sixty or seventy yards of us, when Fanning and thirty of our riflemen assailed the bank, and with a coolness and precision that would have done credit to the most veteran troops poured a steady fire into the ranks of the dragoons.

It required some nerve and courage for men who have never gone through any regular military training to stand their ground singly and unprotected, within fifty yards of an advancing line of cavalry. Our fellows did it however and fired—not all at once in a hurry, but slowly and deliberately; a running fire, every shot of which told. Saddle after saddle was emptied; the men, as they had been ordered, always picking out the foremost horsemen, and as soon as they had fired jumping down the bank to reload. When the whole of the thirty men had discharged their rifles, Wharton and myself with the reserve of six and thirty more, took their places; but the dragoons had almost had enough already, and we had scarcely fired ten shots when they executed a right about turn, with an uniformity and rapidity which did infinite credit to their drill; and went off at a pace that soon carried them out of the reach of our bullets. They had probably not expected so warm a reception. We saw their officers doing every thing they could to check their flight imploring, threatening, and even cutting at them with their sabres, but it was no use—if they were to be killed, it must be in their own way, and they preferred being cut down by their officers to encountering the deadly precision of rifles in the hands of men who being sure of hitting a squirrel at a hundred yards, were not likely to miss a Durango dragoon at any point within range.

Our object in ordering the men to fire slowly was, always to have thirty or forty rifles loaded wherewith to receive the enemy should he attempt a charge *en masse*. But our first greeting had been a sickener, and it appeared almost doubtful whether he would venture to attack us again, although the officers did every thing in their power to induce their men to advance. For a long time neither threats, entreaties nor reproaches produced any effect. We saw the officers jostling and impatiently spurring their horses, till the furious animals plunged and reared, and sprang with all four feet from the ground. It is only just to say that the officers exhibited a degree of courage far beyond anything we had expected from them. Of the two squadrons that charged us two thirds of the officers had fallen; but those who remained, instead of appearing intimidated by their comrades' fate, redoubled their efforts to bring their men forward.

At last there appeared some probability of their accomplishing this, after a most curious and truly Mexican fashion. Posting themselves in front of their squadrons, they rode on alone for a hundred yards, or so, halted, looked round, as much as to say—"You see there is no danger as far as this," and then galloping back led their men on. Each time that they executed this maneuver, the dragoons would advance slowly some thirty or forty paces, and then halt as simultaneously as if the word of command had been given. Off when the officers again, some distance in front, and then back again to their men, and got them on a little farther. In this manner these heroes were inveigled once more to within a hundred and fifty yards of our position.

Of course, at each of the numerous halts which they made during their advance, they favored us with a general, but most innocuous discharge of their carbines; and at last, gaining confidence, I suppose, from our passiveness, and from the noise and smoke they themselves had been making, three squadrons which had not yet been under fire, formed open column and advanced on a trot. Without giving them time to halt or reflect—"Forward! Charge!" shouted the officers, urging their own horses to their utmost speed; and following the impulse thus given, the three squadrons came charging furiously along.

Up sprang thirty of our men to receive them. Their orders were to fire slowly, and not throw away a shot, but the gleaming sabres and rapid approach of the dragoons hurried some of them, and firing a hasty volley, they jumped down the bank again. This precipitation had nearly been fatal to us. Several of the dragoons fell, and there was some confusion and a momentary faltering amongst the others; but they still came on. At this critical moment, Wharton and myself, with the reserve, showed ourselves on the bank. "Slow and sure—mark your men!" shouted we both. Wharton on the right and I on the left. The command was obeyed: rifle after rifle cracked off, always aimed at the foremost of the dragoons, and at every report a saddle was emptied. Before we had all fired, Fanning and a dozen of his sharpest men had again loaded; and were by our side.

For nearly a minute the Mexicans remained, as if stupefied by our murderous fire, and uncertain whether to advance or retire; but those who attempted the former, were invariably shot down, till at last began a retreat, which was soon converted into a rout. We gave them a farewell volley, which eased a few more horses of their riders—and then got under cover again, to await what might next occur.

But the Mexican caballeros had no notion of coming up to the scratch a third time. They kept patrolling about, some three or four hundred yards off, and firing volleys at us, which they were able to do with perfect impunity, as at that distance we did not think proper to return a shot.

The skirmish had lasted nearly three quarters of an hour. Strange to say, we had not a single man wounded, although at times the bullets had fallen about us as thick as hail. We could not account for this. Many of us had been hit by the balls, but a bruise or a graze of the skin was the worst consequence that had ensued. We were in a fair way to deem ourselves invulnerable.

We were beginning to think that the fight was over for the day, when our videttes at the lower ford brought us the somewhat unpleasant intelligence that large masses of infantry were approaching the river, and would soon be in sight. The words were hardly uttered, when the roll of the drums, and shrill squeak at the file became audible, and in a few minutes the head of the column of infantry having crossed the ford, ascended the sloping bank, and defiled in the prairie opposite the island of musket trees. As company after company appeared, we were able to form a pretty exact estimate of their numbers. There were two battalions, together about a thousand men; and they brought a field-piece with them.

These were certainly rather long odds to be opposed to seventy-two men and three officers; for it must be remembered that we had left twenty of our people at the mission and in the island of trees. Two battalions of infantry, and six squadrons of dragoons—the latter, to be sure, disheartened and diminished by the loss of some fifty men, but nevertheless formidable opponents, now they were supported by the foot soldiers. About twenty Mexicans to each of us. It was getting past a joke. We were all capital shots, and most of us, besides our rifles, had a brace of pistols in our belts; but what were seventy-five rifles, and five or six score of pistols against a thousand muskets and bayonets, two hundred and fifty dragoons, and a field-piece loaded with canister? If the Mexicans had a spark of courage or soldierly about them our fate was sealed. But it was exactly this courage and soldierly ship, which we made shure would be wanting.

Nevertheless we, the officers, could hardly repress a feeling of anxiety and self-reproach, when we reflected that we had brought our comrades into such a hazardous predicament. But on looking around us, our apprehensions vanished. Nothing could exceed the perfect coolness and confidence with which the men were cleaning and preparing their rifles for the approaching conflict; no bravado—no boasting, talking or laughing, but a calm decision of manner, which at once told us, that if it were possible to overcome such odds as were brought against us, those were the men to do it.

Our arrangements for the approaching struggle were soon completed. Fanning and Wharton were to make head against the infantry, and cavalry. I was to capture the field-piece—an eight-pounder.

This gun was to be placed by the Mexicans upon their extreme left, close to the river, the shores of which it commanded for a considerable distance. The bank on which we were posted was, as before mentioned, indented by caves and hollows, and covered with a thick tapestry of vines and other plants, which was now very useful in concealing us from the artillerymen. The latter made a pretty good guess at our position, however, and at the first discharge, the canister whizzed past us at a very short distance. There was not a moment to lose, for one well-directed shot might exterminate half of us. Followed by a dozen men, I worked my way as well as I could through the labyrinth of vines and bushes, and was not more than fifty yards from the gun, when it was again fired. No one was hurt, although the shot was evidently intended for my

party. The enemy could not see us; but the motion of the vines, as we passed through them, had betrayed our whereabouts; so, perceiving that we were discovered, I sprang up the bank into the prairie, followed by my men to whom I shouted, above all to aim at the artillerymen.

I had raised my own rifle to my shoulder, when I let it fall again in astonishment at an apparition that presented itself to my view. This was a tall, lean, wild figure, with a face overgrown by a long beard that hung down upon his breast; and dressed in a leather cap, jacket, and moccasins. Where this man had sprung from was a perfect riddle. He was unknown to any of us, although I had some vague recollection of having seen him before, but where or when, I could not call to mind. He had a long rifle in his hands, which he must have fired once already, for one of the artillerymen lay dead by the gun. At the moment I first caught sight of him, he shot down another, and then began reloading with a rapid dexterity, that proved him to be well used to the thing. My men were as much astonished as I was by this strange apparition, which appeared to have started out of the earth; and for a few seconds they forgot to fire, and stood gazing at the stranger. The latter did not seem to approve of their inaction.

"D—ye eyes, ye starin' fools shouted he in a rough hoarse voice, 'don't ye see them art'illerymen? Why don't ye knock 'em on the head?'

It certainly was not the moment to remain idle. We fired: but our astonishment had thrown us off the balance, and we nearly all missed. We sprang down the bank again to reload, just as the men serving the gun were slewing it round, so as to bring it to bear upon us. Before this was accomplished, we were under cover, and the stranger had the benefit of the discharge, of which he took no more notice than if he had borne a charmed life. Again we heard the crack of his rifle, and when, having reloaded, we once more ascended the bank, he was taking aim at the last artilleryman, who fell, as his companions had done.

"D—ye, for laggin' fellows!" growled the stranger. "Why don't ye take that 'ere big gun?"

Our small numbers, the bad direction of our volley, but above all the precipitation with which we had jumped down the bank after firing it, had so encouraged the enemy, that a company of infantry, drawn up some distance in the rear of the field-piece, fired a volley, and advanced at double quick time, part of them making a small *detour* with the intention of cutting us off from our friends. At this moment, we saw Fanning and thirty men coming along the river bank to our assistance; so without minding the Mexicans who were getting behind us, we rushed forward to within twenty paces of those in our front, and taking steady aim, brought down every man his bird. The sort of desperate coolness with which this was done, produced the greater effect on our opponents, as being something quite out of their way. They would, perhaps, have stood firm against a volley from five times our number, at a rather greater distance; but they did not like having their mustaches singed by our powder; and after a moment's wavering and hesitation, they shouted out "¡Diabólos! ¡Diabólos!" and throwing away their muskets, broke into a precipitate flight.

Fanning and Wharton now came up with all the men. Under cover of the infantry's advance, the gun had been re-manned, but, luckily for us, only by infantry soldiers; for had there been artillerymen to seize the moment when we were all standing exposed on the prairie, they might have diminished our numbers not a little. The *fuso* was already burning, and we had just time to get under the bank when the gun went off. Up we jumped again, and looked about us to see what was next to be done.

Although hitherto all the advantages had been on our side, our situation was still a very perilous one. The company we had put to flight had rejoined its battalion, which was now beginning to advance by *echelon* of companies. The second battalion, which was rather further from us, was moving forward in like manner, and in a parallel direction. We should probably, therefore, have to resist the attack of a dozen companies, one after the other; and it was to be feared that the Mexicans would flush by getting over their panic terror of our rifles, and exchange their distant and ineffectual platoon-firing for a charge with the bayonet, in which their superior numbers would tell. We observed, also, that the cavalry, which had been keeping itself at a safe distance, was now put in motion, and formed up close to the island of musket trees, to which the right flank of the infantry was also extending itself. Thence they had clear ground for a charge down upon us.

Meanwhile, what had become of the twelve men whom we had left in the island? Were they still there, or had they fallen back upon the mission in dismay at the overwhelming force of the Mexicans? If the latter it was a bad business for us, for they were all capital shots, and well armed with rifles and pistols. We heartily wished we had brought them with us, as well as the eight men at the mission. Cut off from us as they were, what could they do against the whole of the cavalry and two companies of infantry which were now approaching the island? To add to our difficulties, our ammunition was beginning to run short. Many of us had only half powder and ball for fifteen or sixteen charges, which were now reduced to six or seven. It was no use depending, however; and after a hurried consultation, it was agreed that Fanning and Wharton should open a fire upon the enemy's centre while I made a dash at the field-piece before any more infantry had time to come up for its protection.

The infantrymen who had re-manned the gun were by this time shot down, and, as none had

BY OLD HUMPHREY.

"Well, Abel," said old Abraham Ireland, who had called to know how the improvements were getting on, "the smoke ain't doin' no harm to the chimney, he set off to the bricklayer, who, the following morning bricked up the chimney a little closer, to make the draught quicker; so that when Abel once more returned home, he found a clean hearth, a bright fire, a good tempered wife and a house little troubled with smoke as any house in the parish."

...the value of the glass, and the precious metals, and all the knowledge of it, therefore, ought to be destroyed.

ver more (Haine's Corner) Waterford, Chaplin Nelson
Samuel R. Nelson.
N. H. Remember THOMAS CROCKER is the only reg-
ularly authorized Agent for the sale of the above invaluable med-
icine in this Village, and do not purchase elsewhere, if you
wish to be sure of obtaining the GENUINE MEDICINE.
A fresh supply just received by the Agents in this County
at the New-England Office of the N. A. College of Health,
120 City.

therefore claim to foreclose said mortgaged premises
precably to the Statute in such case made & provided.
ASAPH KITTRIDGE.
JOSEPH JACKSON.
Paris, July 2th, 1844.

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PARIS HILL, OXFORD COUNTY.
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